

EXHIBIT 5



Yossi Newfield in front of his former yeshiva Oholei Torah Mesivta.
Annie Wermiel

LIVING

These taxpayer-funded Jewish schools are dooming young men to poverty

By [Doree Lewak](#)

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Judaism refers to its followers as “people of the book.” But the children — some 57,000 of them in New York City alone, according to the 2013 census — of the state’s ultra-Orthodox communities are largely being denied an education that includes science, math and English books.

In April, state Senator Simcha Felder (D — Brooklyn) refused to sign off on the state budget unless yeshivas, which accept millions of dollars in government funding, were given more autonomy over curricula. Per a [Post editorial](#), “Felder demanded [legislation] to exempt private yeshivas from state requirements to provide adequate education in basic areas such as English, math, science and history.”

It was announced on Wednesday that Felder [secured some \\$200,000 in discretionary funds for “education access” programs](#) for Agudath Israel, the lobbying force that helped fight state efforts to impose instructional standards on yeshivas.

Advocates who believe Jewish children are being harmed by yeshivas are devastated by the news.

"[They] are being denied an education," said Naftuli Moster, executive director of YAFFED, an organization that advocates to improve secular education in ultra-Orthodox yeshivas. "The main reason has to do with [yeshiva administrators] saying there's no time to learn stuff [students] won't use in life — especially boys, who are [expected] to be rabbis."

Moster added that there are other issues at hand as well: "There are certain things in science and history that contradict portions of the Torah — fossils, dinosaurs."

What secular education young boys receive typically ends at the equivalent of about seventh grade, with only minimal English and reading studied after that. "They don't learn about the history of slavery or the Civil War," said Moster.

Felder had no comment for this story. Rabbi David Zweibel, of the aforementioned Agudath Israel, said, "The majority of yeshiva graduates are happy with the education they receive."

Around age 13, boys enter yeshiva in lieu of high school, where 12-hour days largely focus on the religious texts of the Torah and Talmud. (Girls, who aren't required to learn Torah, receive a more well-rounded education.)

Hasidic boys are groomed to be rabbis, but roughly 5 percent of them succeed. "The other 95 percent are doomed to a life of struggle and poverty," said Moster.

Indeed, New York's ultra-Orthodox communities are disproportionately dependent on government handouts. According to a recent 24/7 Wall Street report, the Hasidic village of New Square, in Rockland County, is the poorest in the state — with a 70 percent poverty rate.

"You have tens of thousands of families who depend on government assistance," said Moster. "It's a double whammy, as these yeshivas get your tax dollars, too."

He said that the new legislation will create more problems, adding, "The kids are going to suffer."

Here, three men raised in New York's Hasidic communities reveal how their yeshiva education has hurt them.

His father earned an MD from Harvard Medical School. But Yossi Newfield stopped learning English — and all secular studies — at age 9.

"I could have been a doctor — if only I'd had a science class," he said. "But there was no science. Zero. My yeshiva didn't even teach the ABCs."

In fact, he revealed, "I was almost fired from my first job [as an executive assistant] because I didn't know how many zeroes [you write for] 1,000,000."

Newfield was educated at the elite Oholei Torah yeshiva in Crown Heights. His formerly nonobservant parents — his father is a dermatologist — had moved to the neighborhood, where Newfield still resides, after turning to the ultra-Orthodox Lubavitch movement as young adults.



Naftuli Moster
J.C. Rice

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"My father, who got the best education in the world, knows better than anybody how important an education is," said Newfield. "It's so hard to comprehend how he . . . sent me and my brothers to a school that did not teach the English language." From ages 9 to 17, only Yiddish was allowed to be spoken inside Newfield's classroom. He learned "basic reading" only until about third grade.

He said the only reason he knew all 50 states as a child was from his baseball card collection, adding, "I don't think I knew the president's name."

At his yeshiva, there was supposed to be an hour or two of secular studies, but Newfield said that "If the teacher . . . didn't want to teach or was bored, they would put on the same 'Pinocchio' video."

The second of nine children, he recalls being "terribly envious" when he would see his five sisters coming



State budget allows yeshivas to skip teaching secular skills: critics

home with biology and algebra textbooks. "I only knew the [word] 'chemistry' because I saw it on their textbooks."

While yeshiva boys study Talmud from 7:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m., girls split their time between religious and secular classes.

After finishing yeshiva at 17, Newfield was sent by his parents to religious finishing schools around the world to continue his Talmudic studies — and that's how he discovered just how much he was really missing. While studying at a yeshiva in New Jersey, he was told that "the local public library is off limits to every student in this room." But at a public library in Melbourne, Australia, he came across the works of Henry Roth and Philip Roth, whom he now considers his favorite authors. "It opened up a whole new

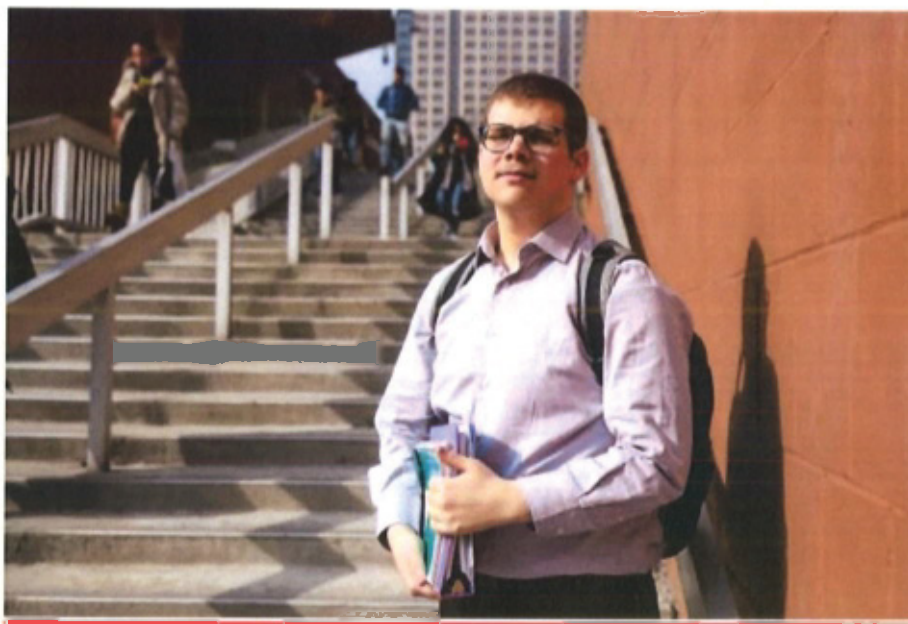
world."

Newfield — who at 23 learned the whole multiplication table for the first time, "I didn't know seven times seven" — fought to catch up, studying math, science and English around the clock to earn his GED. "It's very hard when you're 23 to start learning [multiplication]," he said. "Had I learned this at a young age, it would have been second nature."

He earned a bachelor's in history at Touro College a few years later and went on to work as a paralegal at an immigration law firm, earning \$39,000 a year. (He is currently between jobs.)

"My main goal is to be self-sufficient — not dependent on handouts," Newfield said. "I have a friend in Section 8 [housing] with a three-bedroom apartment and 11 kids. I lent him \$2,000 for his daughter's bat mitzvah."

Although he is currently single, Newfield hopes he can provide his own future children with a rich education.



Zalman Blau
Annie Wermiel

"I would definitely give my kids a dual curriculum," he said. "I want them to have opportunity — to know science, math, English. A worldly knowledge."

Walking by his old school, he looks at the building with despair. "The only thing these kids could do is be rabbis," he said. "The Talmud says, 'One who doesn't teach his son a trade, is as if he teaches him to steal.' But religion is not a trade."

When Zalman Blau earned his Regents diploma from the Chovevei Torah yeshiva in Crown Heights four years ago, he wanted to go on to study coding. There was just one problem when he enrolled at college last year.

"I couldn't put together a proper English sentence," said the now 21-year-old. "I didn't know a verb from an adjective."

As a yeshiva student, when it comes to the English language, "you're technically illiterate," Blau said. Things were no better in his Lubavitch home, where he is one of 13 children: "If it wasn't Jewish, it wasn't in my house. Only Jewish books were allowed."

Although one of his sisters tried to school him herself — "She taught me addition and multiplication" — it didn't go very far. "My parents wanted me to get a truly Jewish education."

Blau knew that the rabbinic path of his classmates wasn't for him. But he was missing the foundation to pursue almost anything else: "Even a basic book in computer science requires [knowledge of] at least algebra."

Determined, he spent months on an application essay for the Flatiron School, a tech institution that offers courses in web development and coding — and made a virtue of his situation. "I spoke about my passion for coding and my story about getting my high-school diploma [despite] basically knowing nothing," Blau said.

Yeshiva students are rarely given a high-school diploma, but can request one and then attend an extra year of classes. Of the 20 boys in his yeshiva class, Blau said, "Technically, most of them don't have a high-school diploma."

Blau, who lives with his grandmother in Crown Heights, is now studying for an associate's degree in math at Borough of Manhattan Community College and dreams of following that up with a four-year computer-science degree.

"I started [college] not knowing where to put a period," he admitted of his knowledge foundation. "At this point, there are still gaps, but it's manageable." But he doesn't want other yeshiva students to face the same challenges as him.

"I know [yeshiva administrators are] afraid of what kind of sex education they're going to give the kids or have problems with evolutionary theory," he said of fears about secular education. "But there's nothing controversial about the Pythagorean theorem or putting together an English sentence."

It's not uncommon for parents to hope their children have a better life than they did. But it's especially important to Yoel Falkowitz, the father of three sons, ages 10, 11 and 13.

"I never heard the word 'algebra' until I was an adult. I only know addition, subtraction and multiplication," said Falkowitz, who's a member of the Satmar movement and attended United Talmudical Academy in Kiryas Joel, NY.

"That's still going on now, but it's worse. [My sons'] lessons are for children half their age."

His boys' secular studies consist of about an hour a day for only part of the school year. He added that the yeshiva tends to hire unqualified former students as teachers, "but they can't string a decent sentence together."



Yoel Falkowitz
Tamara Beckwith

The boys attend a yeshiva in the town of Monsey, NY, where Orthodox communities are "growing exponentially," Falkowitz said. But he added that many people in his community don't see the lack of secular education as a problem because, "They have a case of Stockholm syndrome."

Falkowitz, an information-technology worker who taught himself reading and writing in English and earned his GED, admits that even his own wife is "not on the same page. We've grown apart on this issue."

Still, he feels passionately that his children need to stay in yeshiva in order to avoid any stigma. "It could affect marriage prospects" if the boys are pulled from the yeshiva system. Entering public school would make them "immediate outsiders. Everyone will run away from them like the plague." So he's doing what he can at home.

"I bought the full Rosetta Stone English series," Falkowitz said, adding that he has his sons read books like "The Hardy Boys" series, even though the vocabulary is a challenge. "I'm trying to give them as much as I can."